

Current Developments



USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service

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January 2003



Upcoming Events

January 2-3, 2003, Marketplace
for Ideas, UT Martin

January 6-10, 2003, National
Cotton Council Beltwide
Meeting,
Opryland Hotel and Resort,
Nashville, Tennessee

January 28-Feb. 1, 2003,
National Cattlemen's Beef
Association,
Opryland Hotel and Resort,
Nashville, Tennessee

February 23-25, 2003, Tennes-
see Association of Conservation
Districts Annual Meeting,
Johnson City, Tennessee

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of you for the excellent work you have done this past year. We reached or exceeded most of our goals and this can be attributed to your dedication and professionalism.

We are still operating under a continuing resolution, meaning we do not have an official operating budget for FY 2003 as yet. I encourage you to be optimistic about our budget situation, but if you do spend, do so frugally.

Most importantly, keep a positive attitude and focus on overall conservation goals in your county. The 2002 Farm Bill is still our No. 1 priority, and we need your help in informing landowners and others about new and existing programs and in encouraging participation.

We all have questions regarding technical service providers and what they will mean to NRCS, but this is just a way to accomplish more of the workload associated with the new Farm Bill. In creating the technical service provider process, we are actually creating a whole new industry of conservation service providers who will be providing conservation planning and implementation work for Tennessee landowners.

Again, thank you for your continued dedication and professionalism in providing quality service to our customers.

*James W. Ford
State Conservationist*

What's Inside...

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State Conservationist James Ford Receives Forest Service National Rural Community Assistance Award

James Ford, State Conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Nashville, Tennessee recently received the 2001-2002 National Rural Community Assistance award from the USDA Forest Service for his accomplishments and commitment to outreach efforts.

The award was presented at the Southeast Annual Meeting of the Resource Conservation and Development Council Annual meeting in Myrtle Beach, SC.

In presenting the award, Alan Pigg, Southern Region Program Manager for the USDA Forest Service, stated that Ford was being recognized for his outstanding accomplishments and exceptional outreach efforts in support of agriculture, forestry, conservation and small business in underserved communities in Tennessee and for being a part of a dynamic partnership between the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Forest Service.

He related that many of his accomplishments provide examples of what the Forest Service is trying to achieve through its Natural Resource Agenda and collaborative stewardship efforts. Examples of accomplishments given were:

- When most folks attend a fair or festival, they see and enjoy the exciting atmosphere and activities. When Ford attends such an event, he sees all the work that went into its success. He generates and sells ideas, then inspires sponsors, agencies, and educators to dig in and make it happen.
- Using his interactive skills, Ford works with agencies and educational institutions to garner support for community outreach activities. Examples include: bringing minority children to visit a working farm or delivering video and exhibit materials to local schools. Such outreach has been critical in Southeast Region, where declines in the tobacco and timber industries have left many rural communities underserved and underdeveloped, and in need of information and education that can address their changing needs.
- Through festivals, events, and information products for small businesses, farm operators, and landowners, Ford promotes new ways to generate income and keep local businesses alive.
- While Ford is the primary leader, he partners with other agencies, and he energizes community excitement and participation. From 4-H clubs and garden clubs to business people of all types, community members participate enthusiastically in planning and implementing local events and workshops that will help them grow and adapt to a challenging future.
- The outreach efforts of James Ford and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provide a festive and important avenue for rural Tennessee communities to build knowledge and skills that will take them to a new and sustainable future.



Left to right - State Conservationist James Ford, National Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Steering Committee Chairman Bob Drake, and Tennessee Farm Bureau President Flavius Barker are shown in the photo above recently attending the GLCI Steering Committee Meeting in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

**Mark Your Calendars for
the Second National
Grazing Lands Conference
in Nashville, Tennessee,
December 7-10, 2003.**



For additional information, visit the GLCI website at: www.glci.org/

Southeast Tennessee Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Receives 2002 RC&D Council of the Year Award!

On August 8, 2002, the Southeast Tennessee RC&D Council was selected RC&D Council of the Year for their contributions to the RC&D area. The Council reaches out to a diverse group of partners, citizens, and communities with a variety of projects in its Plan of Work. Many accomplishments were made possible through networking and the participation of partners. The following projects are examples that have enabled the Council to reach out to many who may not have otherwise been reached: The **Cherokee Heritage Initiative Trail Project** reaches out to a diverse spectrum of communities and citizens. This is collaboration between Eastern TN and Western NC. The **Unicoi Turnpike** was named by Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater as one of 16 National Millennium Trails at the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Conference in June. This project is a team effort with Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association. Another project affecting tourism in the area is the **Copper Basin Outdoor Display for the Ducktown Basin Museum**, which provides interpretative data about the area. Another outreach project, held in May 2002, **Give A Hoot for Kids**, is a life-on-the-farm information and education event for inner-city and urban school kids hosted by Council member Oscar Scott and his wife Barbara.

Tennessee's Appalachian RC&D Annual Hazardous Waste Collection Has "Record-breaking" Response!

More than 700 households disposed of household chemicals at the Sullivan Central High School in Blountville, Tennessee on Saturday, September 14. At one point organizers had to move traffic into a double line to avoid backups on Interstate 81. Almost 200 households responded in Carter County, while 100 showed up in Johnson County.

"We removed over half a million pounds of potentially toxic chemicals from over 1,000 households," RC&D Coordinator Roy Settle said. The Appalachian RC&D's hazardous waste collection project is only one of many projects carried out in partnership with local, state and federal agencies and organizations to protect local citizens and improve the quality of life in the five-county area in upper East Tennessee. For additional information, contact RC&D Coordinator Roy Settle at anetrcd@preferred.com.

Tennessee's **Appalachian RC&D Council** recently received a Pinnacle Award for Outstanding Regional Tourism Promotion in partnership with the USDA Forest Service and the Greene County Partnership for development of a Driving Tour Guide.

(Southeast Tennessee continued)

The **Regional Envirothon** reaches out to high school students within the area. It provides them a highly competitive outdoor, hands-on environmental challenge.

Other projects in which the Council has demonstrated the ability to reach out and help others who are less fortunate are the Bradley/Polk Supplemental Grant, Help People Who Help Themselves, and Deals on Wheels. The objectives of these projects are to improve the economic and social well-being of citizens of the area, and help them move toward self-sufficiency. The Council pro-

(Continued on Page 4)

Clinch-Powell RC&D Area Receives \$1.8 Million Grant for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment Program.

Tennessee's Clinch-Powell RC&D Council has received word that a grant they had written for another nonprofit agency in the RC&D area was recently awarded for \$1.8 million. It is a three-year alcohol and drug abuse prevention and treatment program that will be active in six high schools. It is the second largest grant awarded through the efforts of the RC&D for the area. The Clinch Powell RC&D area is in northeast Tennessee and covers Claiborne, Hancock, Union, Grainger, and Hawkins Counties. For additional information, contact Lindy Turner, RC&D Coordinator at Email: lindy@clinchpowell.org.

(Southeast Tennessee...continued)

vided assistance to local Department of Human Services (DHS) welfare recipients and acted as the fiduciary agent for these projects.

In addition to the above projects the team effort and the teambuilding capacity of the Southeast Tennessee RC&D Council is demonstrated by the following projects and the partnerships:

-Oostanaula Creek Watershed Water Quality Project is a six-year project to be completed in three phases at a cost of approximately \$200,430.00 for the first phase.

-Firewise in East Tennessee is a cooperative project with the USFS.

-Code of Country Living publication to provide information for city folk moving to a rural setting.

-Testing of Devices for Controlling the Spread of Kudzu

-Cost-share and Information and Education (I&E) projects to provide assistance to producers to address their Animal Feeding Operations (AFO) or Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) needs and to pave the way for the team work of the District Conservationists in assisting producers with nutrient management.

-AgriLeadership Southeast training project. This was the first year for this training that provided 17 participants with leadership skills to contribute to communities in the area. The Council plans to continue it in the future.

The Southeast Tennessee RC&D Council is a very active partner with two regional efforts to improve the quality of life and the protection of natural resources in the area. These are the **Hiwassee Interagency Team** and the **Conasauga River Alliance**. The Conasauga River Alliance is particularly unique because it is in two states (Tennessee & Georgia) and a joint effort of two RC&D Councils (Southeast Tennessee & Limestone Valley).

Other awards presented at the Tennessee Council Meeting this year were:

-Outstanding Council Member: Audrey Burton, Southeast Tennessee RC&D

-Outstanding Coordinator: Bob Peters, Southeast Tennessee RC&D

-Outstanding Office Assistant: Benny Ramey, Southeast Tennessee RC&D

-Outstanding Sponsoring Organization: USDA Forest Service, Cherokee National Forest

Five Rivers RC&D Residents Pleased With Urban Project...

Since urban runoff contributes greatly to water quality problems throughout the seven- county Five Rivers Resource Conservation and Development area, Council members became concerned about the problem areas that consisted of upland soil erosion, wastewater treatment, storm water control, and sinkhole pollution.

RC&D Council Members with the assistance of the Natural Resources Conservation Service came up with a plan of action to address their resource needs and concerns with an educational component. Several best management practices (BMP's) were implemented throughout the area for "demonstration areas" as well as solutions to the problems. Area residents are pleased that water quality is being improved and protected. City and county officials, various agencies and organizations, land developers, and the public are utilizing the demonstration areas for educational purposes. Additionally, city planners on planning commissions in consultation with land developers in the area have been impressed with the BMP's and demonstration areas, and as a result, have adopted certain BMP's into city ordinances, rules, and regulations for the control of urban nonpoint source pollution. EPA 319 funding in the amount of \$75,000 (through the Tennessee Department of Agriculture) and approximately \$92,000 of local funding and in-kind services were used to implement the demonstration areas.

RC&D Coordinators Lansford and Newberry Retire...

*We will all miss RC&D Coordinators **Frank Newberry** and **Jim Lansford** who will be retiring in December 2002. Both have served with distinction and professionalism and their talents and expertise will certainly be missed by the RC&D Council*

Members, Conservation Partners, City and County Officials, and others. Jim served as RC&D Coordinator, Hull-York Lakeland RC&D Area. Frank served as RC&D Coordinator, Five Rivers RC&D Area. We wish for both a happy and rewarding retirement!

NRCS Helps Benton County Landowner Protect Streambank and Property...

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently provided assistance to help Charles Key of Benton County to prevent loss of buildings and land. He called NRCS after a large storm had washed trees and eroded soil from the bank behind his storage shed. After needs were assessed and it was determined that a riprap jetty was needed. Riprap jetties help to protect the streambank by deflecting the current away from the bank. The jetties are environmentally friendly because of the minimal amount of disturbance to the stream. After acquiring the necessary permits, the jetty was installed.

James Woodall, NRCS District Conservationist said, "This was a win-win situation for everyone. Not only was the landowner pleased, but our environmental folks were happy with the way we installed this practice. I am glad we could assist both the landowner and the environment."



In the photo to the left, landowner Charles Key (left) and NRCS Soil Conservationist Curt McDaniel (right) view streambank damage prior to installation of riprap jetty. (photo by James Woodall, NRCS District Conservationist, Benton County, Tennessee.)

In the photo below, see the completed streambank stabilization with riprap jetty. (photo by Curt McDaniel, NRCS Soil Conservationist, Benton County, Tennessee)



West Tennessee Landowner Serves His Country in Kuwait and Fights Erosion at Home...

Edward Milam, a young landowner in Henry County, has been very persistent about getting cost-share assistance through the EQIP program to control erosion on a large gully that goes through his farm. After several unsuccessful attempts at trying to get a grade stabilization structure partially funded, Edwards' structure was approved late in fiscal year 2002 and a contract was written.

Edward was glad to be approved and receive cost-share assistance to help stop the erosion on his farm. The gully was large, deeply eroded, and large trees were falling from the tops of the ditch banks. The structure had a seventy-acre drainage area.

Edward is also a member of the local Tennessee National Guard Unit, which was deployed to Kuwait back in October. NRCS made an appointment with Edward to go out on a Friday to do the survey and he was deployed with the National Guard unit the next day. He was very interested in the layout of the structure and even helped NRCS complete the survey of the project.

Due to some rainy conditions, the structure wasn't completed for about three weeks. Edwards' father helped oversee the project in his son's absence. The structure was completed on November 5, 2002. Edwards' father took pictures of the completed structure and sent them to him in Kuwait since he does not know when he will return home. Edward is very interested in taking care of his land by stopping erosion. He is also proud to serve his country in the Tennessee National Guard and U.S. Military.

Hurricane Creek Watershed Erosion Repair Project Completed

Construction work has been completed on the Hurricane Creek Watershed erosion control project (site # 9) in Humphreys County, Tennessee.

The project included the shaping and re-vegetating of numerous critically eroding areas on the embankment, spillway, and side slopes. Some areas received the addition of topsoil where gullies were deep. All previously seeded areas were re-seeded with a no-till drill and all areas were fertilized. Approximately 14 short diversions were constructed across selected gullied areas to divert runoff water. Three rock chutes were installed in the most severe gullied areas. Rock checks were installed across the downstream section of the spillway to protect steeper sections of the spillway for gully erosion. Additional pipe was installed on the spillway side slope and other water control structures to increase drainage capacity. Other work included the removal of brush piles and the addition of gravel on access roads in selected areas.



Mark Your Calendars...

- January 12-14, 2003, Conservation Nutrient Management Training, Nashville, Tennessee
- January 20-21, 2003, Annual State Grazing Conference, Spring Hill, Tennessee

Hamilton County's Possum Creek Herb and Crabtree Farms Tour A Success!



Tennessee's Natural Resources Conservation Service personnel recently helped to conduct an interesting tour on two farms in Chattanooga, TN. The tour was carried out on the Possum Creek Herb and Crabtree Farms. Possum Creek Herb Farm is a unique operation with two greenhouses, twenty-four gardens and a catalog/web site mail-order program. Crabtree Farm is a research and educational project promoting sustainable agriculture. The project includes an on-site community garden and an urban farm. Various tour stops included a Fire Ant control project and a test of three different control products, demonstration of ways to deal with beaver dams in undesirable locations, discussion of the benefits of warm season grasses and how to effectively manage them with a controlled burn, and a wetland water manipulation demonstration. Sponsors of the tour included the Hamilton County Soil Conservation District, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Tennessee Department of Agriculture-Forestry Division, USDA Farm Service Agency, The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, AgCredit Association, and the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation. Attendance included approximately 100 participants (primarily landowners) from diverse backgrounds.



SARE Offers Free Resources/Campaign for Small-Scale Farmers

Information concerning USDA's "Farming for Profit, Stewardship & Community" educational campaign may be found on the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Website: www.sare.org

It provides small-scale farmers and ranchers with comprehensive information about ways to increase farm profits, cut costs, broaden marketing alternatives, protect natural resources, and sustain communities.

Also available on the website are 10 "tip sheets" listing free and low-cost resources on a range of topics, including improving soil quality, weed control, marketing, and low-cost livestock systems. The tip sheets tell producers how to obtain books, bulletins and access web sites for valuable information.

Friend of Conservation Receives Award...

Jerry Howell from the Mt. Harmony Community in McMinn County recently received the well-deserved—"Friend of Conservation Award." He and his family have a long history of supporting soil and water conservation. His father and grandfather have farmed in the same community for many years.

He was appointed to the McMinn County Soil Conservation District Board in 1984, and has served seven terms as Vice-Chairman and nine terms as Chairman.

NRCS Receives Emergency Watershed Funds to Assist with Flood Damage

After several months of waiting for Federal funds to be approved, county officials and landowners in several Middle and East Tennessee counties are happy to see things starting to happen. Funds to repair damage caused by flooding in 2001, were finally approved by Congress in late November 2002.

Tennessee received \$7.3 million in federal Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funding to be spent returning streams to their pre-flood carrying capacity.

The funds will assist five counties in East Tennessee and nine counties in Middle Tennessee.

In Greene County, Tennessee a meeting was called by NRCS recently to gather comments and concerns from sponsors, cooperating agencies and individuals. Numerous issues were discussed over a six-hour period with general agreement so it is hoped that plans can proceed fairly quickly.

Photos below and to the right are from Greene County, TN. They show examples of damage to be repaired with the Emergency Watershed Program funds.





In Remembrance...

Several members of our NRCS family have lost loved ones this year. We would like to remember each one and express our deepest sympathy.

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